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ABSTRACT

For almost 20 years, from 1917 to the 1930s, the traveling Chautauqua circuits and festivals brought education, inspiration, and entertainment to remote and not-so-remote communities. Now in the 1980s, emphasis is once more being placed on the value of local community life, on self-reliance and mutual help with respect to the social, cultural, and economic well-being of communities. A revised 1980s version of the Chautauqua ideal may provide one of the catalysts for this movement across Canada. This handbook is meant to be used as an aid in planning and conducting a community Chautauqua, an event that could become an annual tradition. In a narrative format, the booklet covers the following topics: the Chautauqua coordinator, the Chautauqua committee, sponsorship, program ideas, surveying the community, holding a public meeting, assigning jobs, beginning the detailed planning, planning ahead, coordinator's checklist, budgeting, concessions and vendors, charging admission, promotion and publicity, legal and administrative considerations, site management, and wrapping it all up. A contact person's name and address are given. Appendixes to the guide list resources, provide pointers on site selection, and describe a community Chautauqua example. (KC)

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C H A U T A U Q U A I S B A C K !

HOW TO ORGANIZE A
COMMUNITY EDUCATION FESTIVAL

Community Initiatives Publications

August, 1985

CHAUTAUQUA

On June 28, 1917, the first Canadian travelling Chautauqua opened in Mission, British Columbia. Following a route through B.C., Alberta (where it played Lethbridge - the first Canadian town to have signed a Chautauqua contract) and on through Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the circuit concluded its Canadian tour that summer on August 18 in Cranbrook, B.C. More than 40 towns had benefited from the six-day programs of lectures, dramatic presentations and musical productions.

During the fall and winter of 1917, three-day programs -- reduced versions of the summer circuit -- played in schools, theatres and community halls in an additional 100 small towns and villages in the four western provinces. For almost 20 years, the travelling Chautauqua circuits and festivals brought education, inspiration and entertainment to remote and not-so-remote communities (television had not arrived!).

Now, in the 1980's, emphasis is once more being placed on the value of local community life, on self-reliance and mutual help with respect to the social, cultural and economic well-being of our communities. A revised 1980's version of the Chautauqua ideal may provide one of the catalysts for this movement across Canada.

CHAUTAUQUA 1980's STYLE

Unlike the original Chautauqua of the 1920's and 1930's, in which a travelling program of artists and entertainers moved from town to town on a pre-booked circuit tour organized centrally by the Chautauqua headquarters, the 1980's version will feature local talent and resources, and be an annual culmination of a variety of interests and activities. Imported "circuit" educators and artists may be the "icing on the cake" as a result of several Chautauquas being planned concurrently or consecutively in a region, allowing resource people to travel economically to a number of such programs.

A Celebration of Learning in the Community is an example of an overall theme for the Chautauqua. Presentations may take the form of lectures, hands-on demonstrations, workshops, seminars, drama, sing-alongs, and dances. In essence, it is a community eduation festival, running from two to six days, as local circumstances determine.

This handbook is meant to be used as an aid in planning and conducting a community Chautauqua -- an event that could become an annual tradition, and one that is keenly anticipated by all for its contribution to community life.

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Inspiration and ideas for this handbook have been drawn from:

- **Chautauqua in Canada,** Sheilagh S. Jameson, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, Calgary, Alberta, 1979.
- **Community Festivals Handbook**, Community Projects Foundation, 60 Highbury Grove, London, N5 2AG, England.
- **Ontouring - Guidelines for the Sponsorship of the Professional Performing Arts in the Community**, Ontario Arts Council, Suite 500, 151 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario, M5S 1T6.

THE CHAUTAUQUA COORDINATOR

This Handbook assumes that a community Chautauqua will have a Coordinator (quite possibly the person who initiates the idea) and a working committee, with a core group at the outset and increasing numbers of volunteer helpers as the time of the event draws near.

Whether paid or voluntary, the Coordinator's role is that of the staff person to the Chautauqua Committee. This person must be able to take initiative, offer advice and criticism as well as encouragement, and allocate tasks. The Coordinator will be the central point for administration and information as the planning develops.

THE CHAUTAUQUA COMMITTEE

A core group of between six and ten individuals is ideal. These should be people with enthusiasm, commitment and connections with the community's many interests. While formal representation is not essential, it is important to constitute the Committee at a meeting where the essential question is asked: "Who is not here who should be?" The Coordinator may call and chair this first meeting of the Committee. The name of the group and its purpose should be established at the outset. Also, the people willing to serve as the "core" should be named as soon as possible, together with their responsibilities, e.g. chairperson, treasurer, secretary, etc. Keeping brief written records of meetings is important.

A clear identity and agreed-upon objectives will make the work easier in the long-run.

> It is important to combine the formal framework and an informal style of working together, to be open to new people and to be flexible about ideas.

SPONSORSHIP

The Committee may simply be a group of individuals wanting to contribute to their community. On the other hand, one of several community organizations may officially sponsor the program. This offers the advantages of official endorsement and perhaps some resources.

PROGRAM IDEAS ... DREAMING THEM UP

Early in the planning, ask your Committee to dream a little. What is the best mixture of information, education, entertainment and participation that will capture people's interest?

It is suggested that you:

- choose an overall theme for Chautauqua -- something from which a good slogan can be drafted;
- use music, art and theatre to reinforce the theme;
- select some subjects that are current in the community or region, and around which debate, information and awareness can be generated;

- provide opportunities for "hands-on" participation by those in attendance; a chance to acquire a new skill, and to join in a folk dance;
- mix structured and unstructured educational opportunitites -- workshops, courses, exhibits, displays, and drop-in activities;
- promote direct learning and skill exchanges among participants;
- strike a balance between the serious and the hokey;
- give high visibility to people and accomplishments that build community spirit;
- be alert to program ideas that may have some continuing benefit to the community after Chautauqua is over.

May your dreams range far ... and the
results ring true ... (anon)

SURVEYING YOUR COMMUNITY

We are not proposing here a survey or formal questionnaire about community interests. We are talking about finding out who is in touch with community interests and has a feeling for what might capture people's imaginations. We are also talking about identifying the community resources that will be required to support the event.

Consider:

- What programs, visiting arts, lecturers, film festivals, sports events, dramatic or musical presentations are scheduled over the next 12 months? Could some of them be part of Chautauqua?
- What facilities are available, on what dates, and for what cost?

Remember to be in touch with the community college, library, elementary and secondary schools, community centre, churches, and service clubs to elicit details of their plans for the coming months, and their enthusiasm and support for the Chautauqua idea.

HOLDING A PUBLIC MEETING

With at least two weeks' notice, the Committee should hold a public meeting to inform the members of the community of the initial plans for Chautauqua and to recruit their support. Make a special effort to invite individuals who can be a key to the program's success. Offer "sample" Chautauqua entertainment and refreshments.

An outline of the plans and scope for Chautauqua should be presented, and then lots of discussion and brainstorming encouraged. Note the new ideas and the concerns. Circulate a sheet to get the names, addresses, telephone numbers, and interests of new volunteers.

ASSIGNING JOBS

Following the public meeting, the Coordinator should review the areas of interest indicated on the volunteers' list, noting those which are applicable for help at the actual event, and those willing to be involved in the planning as well. The latter names should be given to the appropriate core group members responsible for specific tasks (promotion, site arrangements, ticket sales, etc.), and working sub-committees can be established.

BEGINNING THE DETAILED PLANNING

As soon as possible, the core group and various sub-committees should start to work. Take care and time to brief the newcomers on the work to date, and involve everyone in discussing and revising the plans in light of the response from the public meeting.

Prepare a work schedule and assign dates to it, particularly the date proposed for the Chautauqua! Come to an agreement about the desired location. Sketch out the major program themes and the events and activities these will require. Plan for a date at least six months in advance, giving enough time to handle all the work and yet not allowing enthusiasm and momentum to wain.

> Remember: Check your community calendar to avoid conflicting dates!

WORKING BACKWARDS -- PLAN AHEAD

A good way to begin the planning process is to imagine the scene on the opening date of Chautauqua. Many questions come to mind that indicate how many things need to be considered in advance:

» Where is Chautauqua being held? (Site booked well in advance);

» How did people find out about the program? (Posters, flyers, newspaper ads and stories, radio and television);

- Is admission free, or do they have to pay? If so, how much? (Controlled entrance ways are very important if there is a fee);
- What is the program? (Program circulated in advance);
- How have people come to the site? By car? Is there sufficient parking? By bus? Is there a bus stop nearby?
- Are there washrooms and refreshment stands on site?
- Are there quiet areas for older people, and play spaces for children? What about child-minding?
- Who cleans up the litter afterwards?

The more you can anticipate what will need to be done, the better organized your Chautauqua will be! A large flip chart of your program, with jobs to be done by specific dates, will provide a constant reminder. Make sure there are deadlines for completion for each task that has been assigned.

COORDINATOR'S CHECKLIST

The following are the main organizational matters that have to be covered, and to which volunteers are assigned:

- Program content (the largest and most important);
- Site arrangements -- preparation and management;
- Catering and refreshments;
- Promotion and publicity;
- Financial planning and legal matters;
- Ticket selling
- Secretarial and administrative tasks

Expect the Unexpected "The best laid plans ..."

BUDGETING

Have a financial forecast and review it periodically during the planning process. **Never underestimate the costs -- never overestimate the revenue!**

Sources of Revenue	Areas of Expense
Ticket sales	Artists' fees and travel
Grants	Site rental
Special gifts	Labour costs
Concession sale profits	Piano (moving and tuning)
	Audio and visual equipment
	Other special equipment
	Printing
	Advertising
	Postage/telephone
	Insurance: property and liability
	Contingency (5% of total)
	Security
	Waste collection removal

Before investing money in services or equipment, check into the possibility of donations of expertise or items needed. However, make sure this will not be more trouble than it is worth.

Establish at the beginning of the planning the individuals who are entitled to make financial commitments on behalf of the Chautauqua

Committee. A written estimate of expenses should be approved by the Committee in advance, and all transactions should be carried out by one person -- the treasurer. The treasurer will keep the financial records and report to each meeting.

A Chautauqua bank account should be established, with all receipts being deposited to it, and all expenses paid from it by cheque. This ensures accurate record keeping.

CONCESSIONS AND VENDORS

Concessions can either be fund raisers for Chautauqua that are run directly by volunteers from the Committee, or they can be rented to outside groups for a flat fee. Whichever is the case, standard price ranges should be established, especially in the food stands. Be prepared for uninvited vendors (hot dogs, ice cream, etc.). If you are prepared for them to stay at the site, negotiate a flat fee payable when they arrive. Be sure to file a receipt in return.

CHARGING ADMISSION

Community festivals generally do not charge admission to the site, although some special events do carry a fee. The traditional Chautauqua model charged for a "season ticket" good for all events during the three or six day program. The planning Committee must decide policy in this matter.

If there are tickets to be sold, the "package deal" is recommended. A pyramid plan of captains and sellers can be followed to maximize coverage of the potential audience. With each team responsible for selling 100 tickets and having 10 sellers per team, each seller then is responsible for selling 5 pairs of tickets. Armed with suitable information about Chautauqua plans, kits and deadlines for reporting to their captains, the sellers should be able to accomplish a sold-out house.

The original Chautauqua would not come to town unless citizens of means were willing to guarantee ticket sales. When such commitments are made, they are a powerful incentive to promote sales.

PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

Consistency of design and of information is essential. Check and double-check that every poster, advertisement and flyer uses the same name, place, dates and main attractions. Use one design and color theme, reproduced in several sizes for different purposes.

Distribution of flyers can often be arranged with the help of local youth groups and by getting a group of volunteers together for a "promotion party." Libraries, community centres, shopping areas, and schools are all obvious places for flyers and posters. A bit of street entertainment can add greatly to a positive response from the public.

Prepare a number of posters that only have the name and logo of Chautauqua and which leave space for adding notices and directions during the program. Again, consistency in design and color is important.

Don't stint on publicity -- it has to be widespread to work! Local newspaper and radio coverage should be concentrated during the four weeks before the opening date. At the same time, posters should be placed and flyers delivered. Tickets, printed and numbered, will already have been packaged in kits for the selling teams which begin their campaign with a major publicity kick-off. A prize for the seller completing the quota first might spur competition among the teams.

LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

The Coordinator should arrange for any official permission (i.e. licences) which may be required, and for insurance (i.e. third party liability on equipment, props and injury). Security provisions may also be required. Approval from health authorities may be needed to sell food and refreshments and for installation of temporary washrooms.

Remember to notify local police and fire authorities so that plans can be made in accordance with the appropriate regulations (e.g. details of a parade route if one is held).

SITE MANAGEMENT

Appoint, as soon as possible, a competent site management team. The following checklist should be used in preparing for each section of the program, and appropriate details sent out in advance to each presenter:

- measurement of presentation area (stage, hall);
- audience that is expected (type and size);
- audio visual equipment available;
- washrooms and changing areas locations;
- exhibit and display areas and arrangements;
- lighting systems available;
- rehearsal arrangements;
- accommodation and eating facilities.

Appoint a transportation person -- ideally someone with a van or pick-up truck, since many items, large and small, will likely need to be acquired for the program and returned afterwards.

> Put all understandings with resource people in writing.

A site office as "operations central" needs to be located conveniently on the grounds and staffed throughout the program. All details of the program and work assignments need to be available in

the office. A quiet room nearby should be designated for the handling of cash. Remember to have receipts available for all cash transactions, and keep separate records of which events the money came from.

> Arrange for the safe and prompt deposit of all cash regularly before the sums become too large.

There also needs to be adequate resources in case of accidents or emergencies. First aid people should be available. Have another quiet room for distressed or injured people. Know the community's emergency resources.

An information booth is another 'must.' It should provide program details, serve as a lost and found (for people and property!) and be a general "help" station for the public (keep some toys to occupy lost children!).

CLEANING UP

The physical cleaning up of the site should be well organized in advance and involve as many people as possible. "Many hands make light work," and there is no better way to put people off the Chautauqua idea than to have them burdened unfairly with the job of cleaning up.

AND THEN IT'S OVER: OR ALMOST...

One or more meetings of the Committee should be held after the final day to evaluate the event -- its failures and successes. Participants may be asked to complete an evaluation form during the program, or the Committee may elect to confine the evaluation to themselves. Financial statements need to be presented to the Committee and thank you notes need to be sent to all who contributed... and whose help will be counted upon in the future.

And finally, have a party to celebrate the fact that you and your Committee brought Chautauqua to your community!

C O N T A C T : LET US HEAR FROM YOU

» **About your plans for a Community Education Festival**

» **About how your Festival turned out**

We will be happy to help circulate further information and ideas among everyone interested in this idea. Your experience can help others.

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APPENDIX A

RESOURCES: HOW TO FIND THEM

1. ORGANIZATIONS: GENERAL

a. **The Affiliation of Multicultural Societies of B.C.**

Among this organization's services and interests are those that promote and practice the retention of culture.

1254 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C., V6H 1B6
Tel: 738-2724

b. **Assembly of British Columbia Arts Councils**

The Assembly represents more than 80 community arts councils and their 100,000 members in British Columbia. It is an association of volunteers dedicated to developing interest and participation in all forms of the arts. The Assembly has a newsletter, and compiles and maintains a resource files library. It can provide contact information for local arts councils.

314 West Cordova Street
Vancouver, B.C., V6B 1E5
Tel: 683-4358

c. **Association for Community Education in B.C. (A.C.E.)**

A.C.E. is concerned with supporting and promoting the community school movement. It has an annual conference, conducts workshops and training events, publishes a newsletter and has an information resource centre. A school can be a very good focal point for a community festival or Chautauqua.

4935 Canada Way
Burnaby, B.C., V5G 1M1
Tel: 299-8066

d. **B.C. Provincial Secretary and Ministry of Government Services, Cultural Services Branch**

The Branch has co-ordination staff for the performing arts, the visual arts, community and regional arts programs, and for publications and design.

333 Quebec Street
Victoria, B.C., V8V 1X4
Tel: 387-1011 Local 256

e. **Emily Carr College of Art and Design**

The College has an active touring exhibit and workshop program to promote interest and involvement in art across the Province.

1399 Johnston Street
Vancouver, B.C., V6H 3R9
Tel: 687-2345

f. **Folk Music**

Many communities have informal folk song groups. There are also established organizations like Vancouver Folk Music Festival, which runs the annual mid-July weekend program, and Folkfest, which provides co-ordination for multicultural events, including the annual July 1st celebration in Vancouver.

Vancouver Folk Music Festival
3271 Main Street
Vancouver, B.C., V5V 3M6
Tel: 879-2931

Folkfest
1254 West 7th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C., V6H 1B6
Tel: 736-1512

g. **National Film Board of Canada**

The National Film Board initiates and promotes the production and distribution of films concerned with social, economic, cultural and scientific developments in Canada. The Board staff will actively participate in conferences, seminars and workshops. Publications and educational aids are also available.

Pacific Regional Office
1161 West Georgia Street
Vancouver, B.C., V6E 3G4
Tel: 666-0716

811 Wharf Street
Victoria, B.C., V8W 1T2
Tel: 338-3868

> **Don't Forget:** The art and drama departments in local schools and colleges (and universities for those near one) can be a valuable resource.

2. RESOURCES IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

Every community has lots of talent. Sometimes it's a matter of uncovering it. In thinking about possible sources of expertise and entertainment that you might call on for your own Chautauqua, consider:

a. **amateur theatre and arts organizations**
   - for drama, art displays and promotional graphics

b. **amateur music organizations**
   - for entertainment

c. **hobby groups**
   - for displays and instruction in various hobby skills

d. **issue groups**
   - from the environment to the arms race. Issue groups can promote information, debate and reflection

e. people with an expertise to share or a story to tell
- an amateur archaeologist talking about the first settlements in the region
- a business person who has developed a successful local product
- a young person reporting on her experience as a parliamentary intern at the legislature
- a report on a successful workers' co-operative by one of the members
- a local economist discusses local economic opportunities
- a labour historian traces the history of trade union activity in the region
- a local sports fisherman discusses his favorite fishing spots and lures
- a local quiltmaker displays her skills and teaches her craft

f. the art and drama departments in local schools and colleges
- for advice and participation

g. the commercial community
- for help with organizing, advertising, funding and program content (a business information display)

h. the ethnic, multicultural and native organizations
- for awareness and understanding of the Canadian mosaic at the community level

i. organized labour
- for organizational skills, promotional assistance, operations volunteers, funds and content (a labour information display)

j. the religious community
- for information about the religions of the community and to foster inter-faith understanding

k. local government
- for information about how local government works and what it is doing (an information booth staffed by the Mayor and Council members!)

l. And more!!

APPENDIX B

MORE ON SELECTING A SITE

Here are more factors to consider in selecting the most appropriate location:

- Have some estimate of the number of people you expect. Will they be mainly young, seniors, families, or a cross-section?
- Is the site available for the hours of operation you want (evenings as well as day time)?
- Is the site convenient to public transportation and parking?
- What is the site's proximity to existing pedestrian traffic (one fair was held recently on an abandoned used car parking lot)?
- Is it necessary to secure permission if tents will be used on the grounds?
- Are there adequate display areas?
- Are there sufficient rooms for lectures, instruction and other presentations?
- What is the availability of child-minding facilities?
- Is there a theatre or other stage area?
- Is there administrative office space with a telephone available?
- Is there space for an information centre?
- Is there handicapped access?
- Are there washrooms?
- Are there adequate electrical services?
- Are there approved food preparation and eating areas?
- Are there public telephones?
- Is there back-up space in case outdoor activities have to come indoors?

APPENDIX C

A CHAUTAUQUA EXAMPLE

CHAUTAUQUA'S IN TOWN

A summer Friday evening, soft and warm. The setting sun catches the color of the banners around the entrance to the community centre and the activity tents off to the side. People of all ages, shapes and sizes move around the site. Some are pausing to look at the goods in the crafts market, laid out on card tables and blankets along the walkway to the centre. For bargain hunters a flea-market has set up shop off to one side, complete with a brilliant archway claiming in bold letters that, **"We will never knowingly be undersold or undertraded!"**

While the market has many of the usual cast-offs and exotica it nev rtheless is a flea-market with a difference. People are also trading and exchanging in skills and ideas. One cottage-crafted sign proclaims, **"Skills Exchange: Register here for the skills you can offer and the skills you need."** Another says, **"Saturday Morning Workshop: Plumbing with Plastic."** Still another offers, **"Tips on inexpensive local holidays."** Off to one side a chap with a sandwich board exclaiming, **"Let's Sing"** has rounded-up a bemused but good spirited cluster of kids, adults and a stray dog who are launched into a spirited rendition of some well-worn song. Fortunately they

are safely at a distance from the teenage group that has taken over a corner of the park-lot complete with ghetto-blaster. The teens are demonstrating the latest contortions of break-dancing. Tucked peacefully around the corner from all of this a group of people sits on the lawn, deep in discussion. From an overhanging branch a small sign reads, "**If you ruled the world, what would you do?**"

But all of this is preliminary. The main event is inside. It's the opening night of Chautauqua! In two hours, attention will shift to the main hall. The parade through town will arrive complete with high school band and local dignitaries. The oldest person enrolled in the local continuing education program and the youngest will ring the oversize brass bell and declare the two-day celebration of learning to be officially underway. For the remainder of the evening the audience will be entertained by a rich mixture of local and imported talent. The Native dancers, renowned throughout the region will present their spirited songs and dances. The famous Bach Choir is in town and will give the type of performance for which it is known around the world. Finally, the theatre players from the local college will, through drama, focus on the theme that has been chosen for this year's Chautauqua: "**Remember the Spirit of '57**" -- when the community fell on tough times and, despite all predictions, pulled itself through. The actors will use their talents to entertain and energize, and also to provoke thought and debate about the current issues the community faces, many of them concerned, once again, with the economy.

Over the next two days the building and grounds of the community centre will pulse with activity, and it will all be related to people learning, doing, testing, trying and contributing. Two more large events are planned. One will be a panel presentation of local people and national and international experts on the future of the logging industry and its implications for the region -- a subject of great concern to everyone. The other will be the premier of a film especially prepared for the event by the local movie club. It's part historical and part in the present, portraying residents' feelings and views about their community over the years. Following the film there will be an open-forum -- a town meeting -- to discuss local issues and interests on renewing the local economy.

Surrounding the major events will be workshops, demonstrations and displays on all manner of topics and themes, but most related in some manner to the overall theme, "**Remember the Spirit of '57.**" Courses-for-a-day will introduce participants to basic skills of auto-repair or carpentry. There will be programs on starting a small business or cooperative and other subjects related to local economic self-reliance.

And then Chautauqua will be over. A concluding program on the Sunday evening pulls it altogether, highlighting some of the ideas and the activities that were born with this weekend celebration of learning. It's obvious that many of these will be carrying on in the days ahead, each with its own band of interested citizens. The Spirit of '57 carries on.

Choose the size of Chautauqua program that best suits your time, energy and resources.

Start with a realistic scale and then build each year on your successes.

REMEMBER

THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF WAYS TO PRESENT AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM:

- Lectures
- Panels
- Audio-Visual
- Art, Theatre and Music
- Exhibits and Displays
- Seminars and Workshops
- Hands-on Experience

CHOOSE THE METHODS MOST LIKELY TO GAIN INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION

LOOKING FOR A CHAUTAUQUA THEME?

- What currently are the local interests and issues in your community?
- What people and organizations are knowledgeable on these matters?
- How could Chautauqua help promote informed awareness on these questions?
- Are there regional, provincial, national and international themes that ought to be considered too?

DON'T FORGET: OUTSIDE RESOURCE PEOPLE CAN DRAW INTEREST AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE THEME AS WELL.